



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

FAMILY COURT WOMEN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS SAFE AND SECURE BABY CALENDAR

Question: What is the Safe and Secure Baby Calendar (SSBC)?

Answer: SSBC is a specialty calendar for parents that have children zero (0) to eighteen (18) months old and currently have an open case on the DCYF calendar. These DCYF cases are typically related to:

- DCYF involvement as a juvenile;
- Mental health;
- Housing issues;
- Domestic violence; and/or
- Previously terminated rights with older children.

When you are referred to the SSBC, you are assigned a SSBC social worker to help support you through your DCYF case and the court process. The SSBC calendar meets more often than the regular DCYF calendar in order to monitor your progress more frequently. The goal of SSBC is to promote additional support with the hope of increasing your ability to reunify with your child(ren) and close your DCYF case sooner than on the regular DCYF calendar.

Question: How do I get referred to the SSBC? Who can refer me?

Answer: Often, participants are referred to the SSBC by a judicial officer or their lawyer. However, anyone, including yourself, can make a referral to the SSBC. Referrals have been made by Women & Infants Hospital, Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA), and providers such as Healthy Families America.

Question: Do I need an open case with DCYF to take part in the SSBC?

Answer: Yes, you must have an open DCYF case to join the SSBC, however, you can schedule a Clinical Intake Assessment before the birth of your child. Scheduling a clinical intake assessment, especially before the birth of your child, will allow you to be more informed if you believe you will have an open DCYF case in the future.

Question: Who do I contact when I am referred to the SSBC?

Answer: You may contact the following:

- **Linda Lynch, Director of the Women's Services Department**

Work telephone: (401) 458-5026

Email: llynch@courts.ri.gov

- **Jess Karten, SSBC Social Worker (Care Coordinator)**

Work telephone: (401) 458-5012

Email: jkarten@courts.ri.gov

Question: What happens after I am referred to the SSBC?

Answer: You will either be contacted by the SSBC social worker assigned to your case or you may also contact Linda Lynch, Director of Women's Services Department at (401) 458-5026 or llynch@courts.ri.gov.

You will then be scheduled for a Women's Services Department Clinical Intake Assessment. The purpose of the assessment is to gather more information about you and determine your SSBC eligibility. Your assigned SSBC social worker will contact your DCYF worker and attorney to share their recommendation and then submit a letter to the court sharing this recommendation. If you are determined to be eligible for SSBC, your attorney should review the SSBC Contract and Release of Confidential Information with you before your next court date. If you are interested in joining this program and the judicial officer agrees to your eligibility, you will join the SSBC on the record with your attorney.

Question: What happens during the SSBC intake appointment?

Answer: Clinical intake assessments may be in-person at the courthouse on the 3rd floor in the Women's Services Department in Providence or by telephone.

During the assessment, we complete screenings for both of our specialty calendars, the SSBC and the Family Treatment Drug Calendar. We also will provide you with information related to both specialty calendars and answer any questions you may have about the court process. This is done to determine the potential participant's appropriateness for the program that will best serve the participant's needs.

Please note, the information provided during the clinical intake assessments is confidential. The intake coordinator will not disclose this information to the court or DCYF.

Question: What are the benefits to the SSBC?

Answer: You will have the additional support of an assigned SSBC social worker to help with DCYF and your attorney and to provide coordination and communication when needed. Your SSBC social worker will reach out to all providers to obtain court letters that share your progress and level of engagement with services. These letters are gathered and combined with a progress report that are given to the judicial officer, your DCYF worker, your attorney, and the assigned guardian ad litem.

Another benefit of becoming a SSBC participant is an increase in visitation. When you officially enter the SSBC, the judicial officer typically orders three (3) visits per week with your child(ren).

Question: What are the requirements to participate in the SSBC?

Answer: There are several requirements that participants must meet.

1. Participants must attend court hearings.
 2. Participants must admit to dependency as a condition of joining the SSBC. This will be discussed at your intake appointment and by your attorney before you join the program.
 3. If deemed necessary, you and your child will attend a parent/child assessment through the Brown Center for the Study of Children at Risk.
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Question: What if my case is not in Providence County Family Court? How can my case get transferred?

Answer: If you complete a Clinical Intake Assessment with the Women's Service Department and are determined to be eligible for the SSBC and want to participate, your attorney can request that the current judicial officer transfer the case to the SSBC. If the current judicial officer agrees with this recommendation, you will be given a next date on the SSBC.

Question: Can I qualify for the SSBC if my parental rights were terminated in the past as to my older child(ren)? Can I qualify for the SSBC if there is a current Termination of Parental Rights Petition filed against me?

Answer: All SSBC eligibility cases are reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
